

## Wines of the Languedoc

Rosemary George MW

with photographs by Gary MacDonald

# Unwrapping the Languedoc – the passionate people behind a new great region

Where else in France could you expect to find spicy red wines, one of today's most fashionable whites, sweet *vins doux naturels* and the world's oldest sparkling wine? As the world's sixth or seventh largest wine producer, the Languedoc, in the sunny south of France, has a lot going for it today but until as little as 40 years ago most of its output was dismissed as rustic table wine.

The change in the region's reputation has been brought about by its wine producers – committed and experienced winemakers who care about both their wines and the perception of the region as a whole. In *Wines of the Languedoc*, the latest book from The Classic Wine Library, Rosemary George MW tells the story of the Languedoc in the twenty-first century through the voices of the people who have made it the wine lover's treasure trove we see today. Why write about the Languedoc now? 'Quite simply, and without exaggeration, it is the most exciting wine region of the whole of France. The pace of change in the past few years has been breathtaking,' says George.

Many of today's producers come from vine growing or winemaking *languedocien* families but some have been drawn here from other parts of France and from around the world by the region's affordability, welcoming attitudes and the freedom its appellation system gives to those wishing to experiment. The approaches to viticulture and winemaking here are as varied as the landscape, which includes the rugged Corbières in the west, the distinctive Pic St Loup, the national park of the Cévennes and of course the blue sparkle of the Mediterranean. As George notes, the region is 'a vibrant melting pot of dynamic attitudes, with an extraordinary enthusiasm and energy amongst the wine growers. I have lost count of the times somebody said: "C'est ma passion" ... they simply could not imagine doing anything else, and they are all making the very best wine they can.'

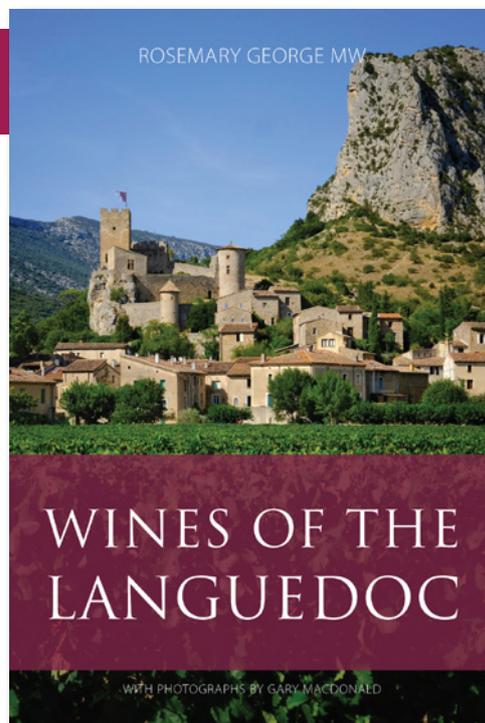
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One winemaker puts the region's recent success down to 'self-confidence', as producers learn to trust their own terroir rather than trying to emulate other great regions such as Bordeaux and Burgundy. Another thinks that the change in attitude can be summed up as 'professionalism'. There has certainly been a move in the region to work with the land and its challenges, including water shortage and increasingly hotter summers. With over one-third of France's organic vineyards located in the region, improvements have focused on variety selection, vine development and novel approaches to vineyard management, including one producer who has installed solar panels to shade his vines as well as generating energy.

George has visited, chatted to and tasted with over 200 of the Languedoc's most interesting producers, to really get to the heart of what makes the place so special. *Wines of the Languedoc* is a fascinating account of a region in the ascendant.

### About the author

Rosemary George MW was lured into the wine trade by a glass of the Wine Society's champagne at a job interview and subsequently became one of the first women to become a Master of Wine, back in 1979. A freelance wine writer since 1981, she is the author of twelve books, including *French Country Wine*, which first took her to the south of France. Back in the mid-1980s she realized this region's enormous potential and consequently went on to write *The Wines of the South of France* (2001) and *The wines of Faugères* (Classic Wine Library, 2016). President of the Circle of Wine Writers, she writes a blog on the region ([www.tastelanguedoc.blogspot.com](http://www.tastelanguedoc.blogspot.com)) and contributes to various magazines such as *Decanter* and *Sommelier India*.

